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CHRISTIANITY AND CONTROVERSY  
A STUDY OF THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO  
THE WAR IN VIETNAM

by

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## ON WAR

There has never been a just one, never an honorable one, on the part of the instigator of the war. I can see a million years ahead, and this rule will never change in so many as half a dozen. The loud little handful, as usual, will shout for the war. The pulpit will, warily and cautiously, object at first; the great, big, dull bulk of the nation will rub its sleepy eyes and try to make out why there should be a war and will say, earnestly and indignantly, it is unjust and dishonorable and there is no necessity for it. Then the handful will shout louder. A few fair men on the other side will argue and reason against the war with speech in hand and at first will get a hearing and be applauded, but it will not last long. Those others will shout them, and presently the anti-war audiences will thin out and lose popularity. Before long you will see this curious thing - speakers stoned from the platform and free speech strangled by hordes of furious men who in their secret hearts are still at one with those stoned speakers as earlier, but do not dare to say so. And now the whole nation, pulpit and all, will take up the war cry, shout itself hoarse, and mob any honest man who ventures to open his mouth. Presently, such mouths will cease to open. Next the state will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is being attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing vanities and will diligently study them and refuse to examine any refutation of them, and thus he will, by and by, convince himself that war is just and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after the process of grotesque self-deception.

from The Mysterious Stranger  
by Mark Twain

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CHAPTER I  
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

Conflict is at best a difficult situation to live with. It is a disruptive factor in the lives of individuals, institutions and nations. However, conflict may also be a creative force in these same circumstances. Since it is usually the direct result of rapid change, it has become more prevalent in these changing times of ours.

The two major sources of conflict in the United States these past few years have been the civil rights issue with its corollaries of the problems of poverty and urban affairs, and the crisis in our nation over the war in Vietnam. In the past year the issue of civil rights has in one sense become intimately connected with the increasing military commitment in Vietnam. When Martin Luther King issued his Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam and called for the instituting of Vietnam Summer in April of 1967, he did so with the full realization that until the problem of Vietnam was resolved the United States government would be in no position to turn its attention to the domestic problems of the race issue and urban poverty. The drastic cut-backs in the government's war on poverty programs late in 1967 seem to support the contention that economically our nation is either unable or unwilling to support a war on two fronts or more accurately two wars. It would appear that we can no longer have both guns and butter. As a

result of this present turn of events, I think that it can be safely said that 1967 was the year of Vietnam.

Just as the discussion over Vietnam has pervaded every sector of our society so, too, it has found expression in the church. Since war of any kind causes men to examine the meaning of life and death, it is surprising that in general Vietnam has not been a major issue in either the pulpits or the congregations of most churches before this year. It is strange that with the exception of the peace churches, notably the Society of Friends (Quakers), Vietnam has not generally been the subject of either sermons or discussions before this time. In fact, earlier this fall when I first announced my intention to write this paper on the response of the churches to the Vietnam situation, one of my colleagues suggested that all I might do is to turn in a blank page. While it is true that to a major extent most of the church has yet to become intimately concerned with the problem, there has been a growing commitment in the past year on the part of American Christianity to take seriously the issues of war and peace particularly in Vietnam. The events of recent days which demonstrate this growing concern have occurred so frequently that it becomes more difficult each day to write an up to date report on the churches' actions. Whereas, earlier I found difficulty in gathering enough information to make a meaningful analysis, now I find myself besieged with data and face the task of sorting out various trends and movements within American Christianity. For this reason

this paper will by its nature and because of the limitation of time and space have to be selective and merely representative of the growing activity of the churches in the United States in the peace movement. In general I rely on the activities of the Episcopal Church as representative of the American Protestant churches. I do this not because the Episcopal Church is in any way more important but because it is the denomination about which I have the most knowledge.

There is a problem of objectivity in dealing with such a controversial issue. This is not to claim that in order to be objective one must necessarily remain neutral. Indeed as Messers Stringfellow and Towne have declared in the introduction to The Bishop Pike Affair, "Neutrality is neither a viable nor responsible option on any of the substantive issues of theology and of the church's mission in society." (p. XVI) It will become obvious to the reader that I am by no means neutral with regard to our nation's present policy on Vietnam. However, I trust that in my analysis of the church's response to Vietnam I am able to present the facts in all fairness and accuracy. Since my opinions will undoubtedly affect the order and content of my presentation, it is imperative that the reader be aware of my point of view from the beginning.

It is the presupposition of this paper that the present United States policy in Vietnam is not justified on moral, religious, political, legal or diplomatic grounds and that the church in America has an obligation as well as a right

to speak out in protest to the war. Furthermore it is my firm conviction that American Christianity must become increasingly prophetic, in the sense of the Old Testament prophets, if our society is to survive the rapid social change which we are just beginning to experience. This means that if the church is faithful to her task in our age, it will be increasingly immersed in controversy and perhaps itself will on occasion become the cause of conflict. However, I believe that controversy and change can themselves be constructive as well as destructive, and I propose to show some ways for the church to make more creative use of conflict than it has in the past.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the course of the church's response to the crisis in American society precipitated by the war in Vietnam. In order to do this responsibly it is first necessary to study the events leading up to the present situation; for as H. Richard Niebuhr has aptly stated, "all attempts to interpret the past are indirect attempts to understand the present and its future."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the first section of this paper deals with a history of United States involvement in Vietnam and a statement of the present policy. The second section is concerned with an analysis of the response of American churches to the situation in Vietnam. Finally, in the concluding section, I offer some of my opinions on the responsibilities of the church in the modern world.

In fairness to those whose point of view differs from



mine, I have chosen to present first my interpretation of the situation in Vietnam. Thus, the reader will be able to compensate for my bias and will hopefully come to his own conclusions.

## CHAPTER II

### A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

#### A History of United States Involvement

The history of the Vietnamese people which began before the birth of Christ, has been spent in a never ending struggle for independence from domination by a foreign power. As early as 221 B.C. the people of the area known today as Vietnam were forced to defend themselves from colonialization by China. Since then the Vietnamese have had a series of overlords who claim the right to determine the policies and programs which affect the lives of the Vietnamese. First the Chinese, then the French, the Japanese for a brief period in World War II, again the French and now the Americans have, by the use of military force, sought to control the political destiny of this small part of Southeast Asia. What was once known as part of French Indochina has become known throughout the world as Vietnam, as a direct result of the war and the massive presence of American military forces there.

The two questions on the lips of most Americans these days are: 1. How did we get involved in this war in the first place? and 2. What can be done about it now? Although the answer to the first question is mainly of historical interest, it is possible that by examining our past course of action we may find guidance for present and future policies. The fact that we presently are deeply committed both economically and politically to the situation in Vietnam is no excuse for failing to examine the basis for our commitment. Even though

we must deal with the present situation we can certainly learn from our past mistakes.

This is not the first time that the United States has had a stake in a war in Vietnam. As Arthur M. Schlesinger points out, "In 1941 Franklin Roosevelt regarded the Japanese movement into Indochina as a threat to vital American interests ...In consequence the Japanese demands on Indochina in July 1941 led directly to the American decision to freeze Japanese assets in the United States; and this action, in turn, led directly to the Japanese decision to bomb Pearl Harbor. Vietnam thus precipitated American entry into the Second World War."<sup>2</sup> Later in the war President Roosevelt tried to extend his policy of anti-colonialism to Vietnam in order to prevent the French from re-colonizing Indochina after the war. "In March 1943 he therefore proposed to the British Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, that Indochina, instead of being restored to the French after the war, should be placed under an international trusteeship and prepared for independence."<sup>3</sup> Roosevelt's opposition to French rule in Vietnam was based both upon his anti-colonial policy in general and his disapproval of the French performance in Indochina in particular. In January, 1944, he expressed this opposition to the British Ambassador to Washington saying "France has had (Indochina) - thirty million inhabitants - for nearly one hundred years, and the people are worse off than they were at the beginning- France has milked it for one hundred years. The people of Indochina are entitled to something better than that."<sup>4</sup> Had

Roosevelt's proposal been carried out the Vietnamese might have been spared some of the bloodshed and agony of the past twenty-five years, but the idea of an international trusteeship died with Roosevelt, and the State Department, under the Truman administration, stated the policy that there could be no trusteeship in Indochina "except under the French Government."<sup>5</sup>

Prior to World War II, however, an effective nationalist opposition to French rule had grown in Indochina under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese who had organized the Communist party there in 1930. During the war Ho Chi Minh had led the anti-Japanese resistance movement and in that capacity had worked closely with the American Office of Strategic Services (the forerunner of the CIA). With the end of the war in 1945, the Japanese had withdrawn from Vietnam and on September 2, 1945 Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The French, who had agreed to recognize Ho's regime as "a free state...forming part of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union,"<sup>6</sup> soon changed their minds and by the end of the year had sent 70,000 troops to Indochina to reestablish French colonial rule. War was once again inevitable and the fighting began with the French naval bombardment of the North Vietnam port of Haiphong in November, 1946. The fighting between the French and the Vietnamese nationalists, known as the Vietminh, was to continue for over eight years. During that time the United States gave more than a billion dollars in

financial and military aid to France.<sup>7</sup> By 1954, when the fighting temporarily stopped, the United States was underwriting 80 percent of the cost of France's war with the Vietminh.

Partly as a result of our previous commitment to the French, but primarily because of our growing opposition to communism during the cold war, the United States considered active involvement in the war in Vietnam at the time of the Geneva Conference following the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu on May 8, 1954. There can be little doubt that Dien Bien Phu represented a grave crisis for American foreign policy. Immediately prior to that decisive battle, in the spring of 1954, President Eisenhower declared at a press conference that the establishment of a communist government in Vietnam, whether Chinese or Vietminh, would be as grave a threat to the national security of the United States as Korea had been four years earlier. "You have a row of dominos set up," the President explained, "you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is that it will go over very quickly."<sup>8</sup> This "Domino Theory" thus became one of the first reasons for our concern over Vietnam. "Even though the biggest domino of all," Professor Schlesinger has remarked, "China, had fallen five years earlier without starting a chain reaction, the possible fall of the less consequential Indochinese domino was suddenly invested with the most fateful consequences."<sup>9</sup> John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's Secretary of State, and Vice-President Nixon soon followed

the President in urging Congress to take action to support the French against the Vietminh. Dulles called for the Congress to permit the President to use United States air and naval power in a "united Action" against the Vietminh even if it meant "serious risks". Nixon told the press that it might be necessary to send ground troops to Vietnam. The proposals of the Republican administration found great opposition in the Congress. Ironically two of the most vigorous opponents of the United States intervention were Senators John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Primarily as a result of the unpopularity of the Korean War, the American public was not sympathetic to military involvement in Vietnam, and Congress rejected the Dulles proposal.

Meanwhile in spite of the tremendous amount of American aid, the French were unable to contain the nationalistic fervor of the Vietminh and on May 8, 1954, the French fortress at Dien Bien Phu fell to the guerillas. As a result of this decisive battle the French looked for a way to extricate themselves from Vietnam. It became the task of the Geneva Conference, which had originally been called to effect a " political settlement of the Korean question" as well as discussing "the problem of restoring peace in Indochina."<sup>10</sup> With the fall of Dien Bien Phu, the conference (representing Britain, USSR, France, the United States, China, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and the Vietminh), turned its attention to a ceasefire in Vietnam. Two agreements came out of the conference: the Geneva Armistice Agreement (Agreement on the

Cessation of Hostilities) and the Geneva Accords (Final Declaration). The Accords were based on the Armistice Agreement. The result of the Armistice Agreement, which was signed by all parties with the exception of the United States and Vietnam, was the establishment of a "provisional demarcation line" at the 17th parallel, with the Vietminh troops withdrawing North of the line and the French troops withdrawing South. An International Control Commission, consisting of Canada, India and Poland, was established to supervise the enforcement of the armistice. The Final Declaration which was approved by a voice vote at the Conference established that general elections would be held in all of Vietnam in July 1956 to determine whether the country was to be reunified.

The full implications of the Geneva Agreements are subject to many interpretations. However, there seems little doubt that one of the purposes was to allow the French a graceful retreat. As Edwin Reischauer, former United States ambassador to Japan, points out, "It seems likely that all of the participants expected the 1956 elections to reunify all of Vietnam under the Vietminh."<sup>11</sup> Since by the time the agreements were signed the Vietminh controlled over two thirds of the country, and by the terms of the agreement they were expected to withdraw to less than one half it seems that they would not have signed the agreement if they had not expected to win the election and gain control over the whole nation. There can be little doubt that all parties expected the division between North and South to be temporary. This

is clearly stated in the documents of the conference themselves: "The conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Vietnam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary."<sup>12</sup>

The immediate United States response to the conference at Geneva was to organize the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in September of 1954. Composed of the United States, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, France and Great Britain, SEATO added South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to the area to be protected by the new organization. Since the Geneva Agreements prohibited either North or South Vietnam from participating in any military alliance, the SEATO pact is only a commitment for a member to "consult" other member nations in the event of a "situation which might endanger the peace of the area."<sup>13</sup> Since that time the SEATO Treaty has been cited as a justification for sending United States military forces to Vietnam, but according to Professor Schlesinger "the proposition that SEATO makes American military intervention mandatory in case of armed attack on South Vietnam finds no warrant in the treaty."<sup>14</sup> Thus in the original Senate hearings on SEATO in September, 1954, Secretary Dulles assured the Foreign Relations Committee that "if there is a revolutionary movement in Vietnam or in Thailand, we would consult together as to what to do about it...but we have



no undertaking to put it down; all we have is an agreement to consult."<sup>15</sup>

At the same time that the SEATO Treaty was being negotiated, the United States was preparing to come to the aid of the French supported regime of Bao Dai. In response to a request for "economic assistance" from Bao Dai's newly appointed Prime Minister, Ngo Dinh Diem, President Eisenhower pledged American support "to assist the government of Vietnam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means."<sup>16</sup> This statement, part of a letter from Eisenhower to Diem, along with the SEATO Treaty have in the past few years been used as justification for military presence in Vietnam. However, it was obvious that neither document had been intended to commit the United States to military intervention at the inception.

In the two years which followed the Geneva Conference in spite of the temporary nature of the demarcation line, and largely as a result of over 500 million dollars of United States economic aid, a separate state was created in South Vietnam. When the French legions left Vietnam, United States money moved in. In the struggle for power which arose in Saigon, the United States backed Prime Minister Diem against Bao Dai's puppet government. In November Diem ousted the commander in chief of the army, and assumed direct authority over the military. By autumn of 1955, he had broken the power of both the political and religious groups which had independent

military forces. In October of that year he defeated the ex-emperor in a referendum, which he would probably have won even if he had not rigged the election. As it was he claimed to have won 98.2 percent of the vote.

Proclaiming himself president on the basis of the referendum, Diem proceeded to develop a strong, totalitarian government in Saigon. By his heavy reliance on Catholic Vietnamese, (Diem was himself a Catholic), he angered the majority of the country which was Buddhist. His method of dealing with dissident elements in the government was imprisonment and in some cases execution. In short he operated in a despotic manner, abolishing elected village government in 1956, and carrying out his policies with a heavy hand. When it came time for the elections scheduled by the Geneva Conference for 1956, Diem was determined that they not take place. With American support, Diem had failed to participate in discussions to hold the elections, and he ignored the deadline of July 1956 set by the Accords. The elections have never been held.

In his memoirs recently published, President Eisenhower explains why the United States was opposed to the elections. Eisenhower says "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting possibly 80 percent of the population would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh."<sup>17</sup> Until 1958 the Hanoi government attempted to arrange for the elections promised at

Geneva, but Diem, backed by the United States, consistently refused.

When it became apparent that the elections would not be held, revolutionary activity increased in South Vietnam. While over 120,000 Vietminh soldiers and their families had gone North after the 1954 division of the country, it has been estimated that a greater number of Vietminh sympathizers stayed in the South and these people became the vanguard of the increasing opposition to Diem. By the use of guerilla tactics and an increasing program of terrorism, especially the systematic assassination of pro-Diem village chiefs, the anti-Diem movement grew rapidly in the rural areas of South Vietnam. The main reason for the Vietcong, as President Diem called the revolutionaries, successes was the harshness of the Diem government in dealing with any opposition. Due to the strong anti-Diem feeling among the peasants, the Vietcong became more successful and more powerful in their opposition to Diem in the late 1950's. Thus, veteran Southeast Asian correspondent, Denis Warner, accounts for the Vietcong's popularity in the following way. "Summary Vietcong justice for a village chief guilty of corruption or brutality did not offend the peasants. On the contrary, it tended to endow the Vietcong with some of the characteristics of Robin Hood and his band of merry men..."<sup>18</sup>

There is little evidence to believe that the guerilla activity in the South in the 1950's was directed by Hanoi or that the Vietcong was composed of North Vietnamese. "It is

not easy to disentangle events of these murky years; but few scholars believe that the growing resistance was at the start organized or directed by Hanoi. Indeed, there is some indication that the Communists at first hung back, evidently regarding the South Vietnamese guerillas..as putschists and infantile leftists."<sup>19</sup> In fact it was not until September of 1960, that Ho Chi Minh's government formally acknowledged the Southern dissidents as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. This National Liberation Front (NLF) as it came to be called, represented the coalition of a number of anti-Diem groups both Communist and non-Communist. On December 20, 1960 the Front presented a ten-point program primarily based upon the overthrow of the Diem administration and including a long list of needed governmental reforms. With the official recognition and support of the Hanoi government, the Vietcong were able to increase attacks on pro-Diem villages until the end of 1960 when it was estimated that they controlled over half of the country of South Vietnam.

In January of 1961 the problem of Vietnam fell to the newly elected president, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Throughout most of the Kennedy Administration, Vietnam remained an area of secondary importance. Kennedy never found the time to devote full attention to the importance of Southeast Asia. However, the young president was convinced that in general Communist activities in the sixties would neither rely on nuclear nor conventional but guerilla war, and he realized that the most effective way to fight the guerilla war in

Vietnam was by the use of counterinsurgency forces. Since counterinsurgency activity is dependent on the political support of the population Kennedy attempted to persuade the Diem regime to make much needed reforms. By increasing the number of United States military and political advisors, Kennedy hoped to stop the tide of popularity which the Vietcong had gained among the Vietnamese peasants, but in so doing Kennedy increased the number of United States advisors in Vietnam from 800 in 1960 to over 15,000 in 1963 when he<sup>20</sup> was assassinated. While at first the purpose of these advisors was primarily political, they soon began to assume military responsibilities, as for example the mission of the first Special Forces Group, the famed Green Berets, sent to Vietnam in February 1962.

The major decision made during the Kennedy Administration involved the mission of the task force of General Maxwell Taylor, and Walter W. Rostow in October of 1961, to report to the president on the situation in Vietnam. As a result of the report of the Taylor-Rostow mission, the problem of Vietnam passed from the Department of State to the Department of Defense and the political solution to the problem was increasingly framed in military terms.<sup>21</sup> In spite of the pressure to commit American military forces to fight in Vietnam, Kennedy officially limited United States participation in the war to an advisory capacity, although United States advisors increasingly participated in military action. Kennedy's official position is best exemplified by his state-

ment of September 2, 1963. "In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it, - the people of Vietnam - against the Communists."<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile in Vietnam, the Diem regime was having its problems. Having survived an abortive military coup in 1960 Diem faced increased opposition to his government particularly from the Buddhist population. By 1963 his support both in South Vietnam and in the United States was eroding rapidly. Finally in May 1963, the Buddhists who had been forbidden to display their flags on Buddha's 2587th birthday, demonstrated against Diem in protest and the government troops fired into the crowd. Following this incident the Buddhist uprising grew in strength. When it became clear in Saigon that the United States had begun to lose confidence in Diem, a group of Vietnamese army officers staged a military coup and Diem was assassinated on November 1, 1963. Three weeks later in Dallas, Texas, President Kennedy also met death from an assassin's bullet and a new president inherited the Vietnam problem.

Vietnam, however, was not to dominate Lyndon Johnson's concern until the election of 1964. Then, faced by the chauvinistic challenge of his political opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater, Johnson chose to run on a policy of limited United States involvement in Vietnam, a policy similar to that followed by his predecessor. When Goldwater argued for the use

of air power and the bombing of North Vietnam, Johnson responded with the following words: "I have had advice to load our planes with bombs and to drop them on certain areas that I think would enlarge the war and result in committing a good many American boys to fight a war that I think ought to be fought by the boys of Asia to help protect their own land. And for that reason I haven't chosen to enlarge the war."<sup>23</sup> (August 29, 1964).

At the same time that Johnson was campaigning upon this platform the situation in Vietnam was rapidly deteriorating. Coup followed coup and in the summer of 1964 a series of incidents in the Tonkin Gulf off Vietnam precipitated the Congress to pass a resolution authorizing the President to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression...The United States is, therefore, prepared as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom."<sup>24</sup> The effect of this resolution was to give the President the power to commit an unlimited number of United States military forces to Vietnam without a declaration of war by Congress. The circumstances surrounding the alleged incident between North Vietnamese patrol boats and the United States Destroyer Maddox have recently been brought into question. At any rate, the Tonkin Gulf resolution set the stage for the

policy of escalation which was to characterize the conflict to the present.

In spite of Johnson's campaign speeches, by the beginning of 1965 he considered the situation in Vietnam to be so desperate that he ordered the commitment of United States combat forces to fight the Vietcong. On February 7, 1965, after guerilla attacks on the United States base at Pleiku, President Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes on North Vietnam. The following month, March, the first combat troops not officially designated "advisors" landed in South Vietnam. Escalation had started. The following months stretched into years and our policy continued to be one of escalation in hope of beating back the threat of the Vietcong. By August of 1965, there were 125,000 United States military personnel in Vietnam. The number of bombing missions in the North increased to 12,673 by September of 1965.<sup>25</sup>

The war has continued to escalate to the point where today (January, 1968) the costs are devastating. In terms of money, last year alone the United States spent over 25 billion dollars to fight in Vietnam. In terms of manpower, we have over half a million United States servicemen in Vietnam. The human misery and suffering is impossible to measure, and still we continue to follow this present policy of step by step escalation. Thus, it can be seen that the history of United States involvement has not been the result of deliberate and careful consideration of the present commitment but has been characterized by a series of small decisions going



back to World War II, decisions which in themselves are minor, but the sum total of which has involved the United States in that nightmare of military strategists, a land war in Asia. The purpose of this brief analysis has been to show how we arrived at our present policy. It now remains to examine that policy.

### The Present United States Policy

The present United States policy on Vietnam is primarily an extension of United States foreign policy during the cold war of the 1950's. Based on the assumption that a communist government is not only the worst fate that can come to any country<sup>26</sup> but also represents a threat to the security of the United States, American foreign policy is primarily anti-communist. A necessary corollary of this is that the conversion of any nation to communism, particularly in Southeast Asia, opens the strong possibility of neighboring nations adopting the same ideology. Thus, in order to protect the "free world" from this domino effect, the United States is committed to stopping the spread of communism through any means available. In the fifties, after Korea, this meant the massive commitment of financial aid to colonial powers engaged in opposition to communist revolutionaries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is this absolute opposition to communism which led the United States to support the dictatorial regime of Premier Diem and even now to support the military government of Thieu and Ky.

Faced with the military threat of the Viet Cong in the early 1960's, the Saigon government, with the support of the United States, launched a full scale offensive against the N.L.F. When it became clear that the government forces were unable to contain the revolutionaries, the United States began to take a more active part in the war. Thus the diplomatic and economic commitments of the United States became transformed into a massive military commitment. Whereas a political solution to the problem of Vietnam had been sought in the 1950's, it became increasingly apparent that only by the use of military force could the United States insure that South Vietnam would not become a communist country. The troop buildup and the initiation of continuous bombing of North Vietnam in the spring of 1965 represented this change from a political commitment to a military one. Since 1965 the United States policy has remained consistent. This is born out by the fact that the major policy statements of 1966 at Honolulu and Manila have not been superseded except for some minor variations made by the president at San Antonio in September of 1967.

In a meeting of the President of the United States and the senior Saigon leaders in Honolulu on February 6-7, 1966, the White House issued the following declaration of the common commitment of the two nations. "The President of the United States and the Chief of State and Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam are thus pledged again: to defense against aggression, to the work of social revolution, to the

goal of free self-government, to the attack on hunger, ignorance and disease, and to the unending quest for peace."<sup>27</sup> The same themes were echoed in the statements of a conference at Manila in October of the same year (1966), and were signed by representatives of the following nations: Australia, Korea, New Zealand, Phillipines, Thailand, United States, and South Vietnam. The statement on the goal of freedom of the Manila Summit Conference reads as follows: "We, the seven nations gathered in Manila, declare our unity, our resolve, and our purpose in seeking together the goals of freedom in Vietnam and in the Asian and Pacific areas. They are: 1. to be free from aggression. 2. to conquer hunger, illiteracy and disease. 3. to build a region of security, order and progress. 4. to seek reconciliation and peace throughout Asia and the Pacific."<sup>28</sup> The presupposition expressed in the statement above is that by the use of military force the United States can insure the stability and freedom of South Vietnam. This conviction that political peace can be achieved by military means has led the United States to adopt a policy of meeting force with a stronger counter-force and has resulted in the step by step escalation characteristic of our Vietnam policy since the beginning of United States involvement there.

While the situation in Vietnam has been extremely volatile since the end of World War II, it was not until the 1960's that the United States became involved in the spiral of military escalation. In December of 1961, President

Kennedy made what James Reston has called "perhaps the first critical decision in the Vietnam war."<sup>29</sup> He decided upon the recommendation of the General Staff to raise the number of United States advisors from 800 to 40,000. The number reached 16,000 by the time he was assassinated. However, it was not until Lyndon Johnson became president that the United States became actively involved in the war.

The legal basis upon which President Johnson has committed over a half a million men to fighting a land war in Asia is the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. This resolution empowered the President to take steps to defend a member of SEATO. These steps have resulted in the escalation of the past four years. Whenever the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese would launch a successful attack, the United States armed forces would counter with more extensive use of more powerful weapons. Thus, "on February 7, 1965, after a guerilla attack on a United States base at Pleiku killed eight United States servicemen and wounded 62, President Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes on North Vietnam."<sup>30</sup> It has been characteristic of the Vietcong that after every step of United States escalation they, too, would find some means of resisting United States military power, whether by increased terrorism among the peasants or by more attacks on United States forces. The one major difference between the escalation of the United States and the escalation of the Vietcong is that the United States has considerably greater military force available and is in greater control of its own forces. The

danger of the present policy of escalation is that it might involve ever increasing force until it gets out of hand, resulting in an unlimited war.

This possibility and the increasing cost of the war to both sides raises the question of the possibility of a negotiated settlement. It has become apparent to United States observers that the only way that the Vietnam problem will be resolved and peace established in Southeast Asia is through some kind of negotiation. The United States has allegedly been willing to negotiate since 1964 and the attempts to arrange talks have been numerous but unproductive. The difficulty in bringing all the parties to the conference table has been a result of the preconditions demanded by both sides. Hanoi has repeatedly insisted on complete United States withdrawal prior to negotiations. The United States has refused to negotiate with the NLF as a party since this would undermine the authority of the Saigon government. In the President's San Antonio speech of September 29, 1967, he said that " the United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardments of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussion."<sup>31</sup> The President also asked for assurance that Hanoi would not take advantage of the halt in bombing. However, the North Vietnamese have responded by demanding a cessation of bombing without any prior conditions.

The present situation is a stalemate. Neither side trusts the other to uphold their promises and so the war

continues, wreaking havoc on a small agricultural nation and resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides. The increasing awareness of the futility of the present situation has resulted in greater criticism on the part of United States citizens to a war which seems capable of continuing for decades. The growing dissent has been met with a strong reaction based on the premise that the dissent gives aid and comfort to the enemy and thus prolongs the conflict. For this reason the situation in Vietnam has produced a critical situation in the United States. This crisis has been reflected in the church. Anti-war groups have grown up within ostensibly Christian communities such as seminaries and parish congregations. The church as a microcosm of American society has reflected the concerns and conflict of opinion which is characteristic of our time. By examining the growth of the peace movement in American churches we can begin to see and understand the reasons for the growing opposition to the war in Vietnam.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

##### The Growth of Dissent

In the past decade the growth of dissent to the war in Vietnam has been proportional to the escalation of military activity in Vietnam. Although there have been critics of our policy there since the United States became involved in 1954, disillusionment did not begin to occur until 1959 when Albert M. Colegrove, a reporter for the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain, went to Vietnam and came back with a highly critical report on United States foreign policy. Colegrove's account reached over two and a half million readers and prepared people to begin to question the activities of the United States in Vietnam. The next major criticism was leveled by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick in their novel, The Ugly American, published in 1959, which has been sold in millions of copies and is one of the ten most popular books in the history of publishing. The book has subsequently been made into a movie which has been rerun on television. Although The Ugly American portrays a gross oversimplification of American foreign policy and offers even more simplistic solutions, it did bring the problem of Vietnam to the American people.

Until the mid-1960's the press had generally been sympathetic toward the administration's policy in Vietnam. The one exceptional voice of dissent came from the New York Times. According to Robert Scheer, "Its reporter David

Halberstam, became the most celebrated 'critic' of State Department policy in Vietnam. His articles earned him a Pulitzer Prize and are credited by some with having turned the United States against Diem and thereby caused his downfall."<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Halberstam, the few critics in the press limited themselves to a criticism of the effectiveness of our policy rather than an attack on the basic presuppositions of the policy in general.

Since 1965, however, there has been an expansion of criticism second only to the escalation of the war itself. One need only mention the press coverage of Prof. Staughton Lynd's trip to Vietnam, and the series of articles in the New York Times written by Harrison Salisbury from Hanoi in December 1966, to help the reader recall the strength of the attack of certain pressmen and reporters on the administration's position. The "credibility gap" between what the administration claimed was taking place in Vietnam and the actual situation has grown to the point where few people now take the statements of the president and the Secretary of State at face value. Even the television networks, ABC, NBC and CBS, have become increasingly critical of information furnished by the State Department with the result that they have maintained permanent staff members in Vietnam for the past few years.

With the growing concern over Vietnam expressed through the mass media, the public has begun to respond. Just as in the civil rights movement when the church came on the



scene after the issue came to the public attention, so too the church has responded to the Vietnam issue somewhat belatedly. This is not to say that certain groups within the church have not been working for peace in Vietnam, but the fact is that the large denominational bodies of Protestantism are just beginning to discover their role and responsibilities in this area. Certain religious periodicals such as The Christian Century, Christianity and Crisis, and Commonweal have led the way as means of communication between the "peace groups" within the church and the church at large. Ecumenical groups such as the Interreligious Committee on Peace, Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam and The Fellowship of Reconciliation have called the church to task. The seminaries and universities have raised the issue of the war and the draft with the result that the official bodies of Christianity have begun to respond to the cries for peace in Vietnam. Since the primary purpose of this paper is to analyze the response of the church to the war, it is necessary to limit the scope of this study to the growth of dissent to the war within Christian institutions. By this, I do not mean to imply that this is the only area of significance. As can be seen in the discussion above at least as much has been happening outside the church as within. However, since the church is somewhat representative of American society as a whole and still remains an integral part of America's culture, the principle elements of the peace movement can be identified in this manner. My selection of the example of the

church stems from my familiarity with this institution more than from any other cause.

### The Peace Groups

Most of the impetus for the peace movement within American churches came not from their general membership or their elected and appointed leaders but from small groups with historically pacifist backgrounds. It is the work of these "peace groups" which has stirred the churches to face up to their tasks and responsibilities over the issue of war and peace, particularly in Vietnam. Only in the case of the so called "peace churches" such as the Quakers and the Mennonites, have the general memberships responded immediately. In these two denominations in particular, the leaders of the churches have long recognized their obligations to present the cause of peace as an expression of Christianity. For this reason these churches fall in a class by themselves. Working through their respective agencies, the Quaker and the Mennonites have been concerned with the situation in Vietnam since the 1950's. The witness of these two churches was begun in the days when it was a very unpopular course of action. Through the American Friends Service Committee and the Mennonite Central Committee these churches have supplied aid to both the North and South Vietnamese. It is worth our time to examine the work of these agencies.

Probably the most responsible activity of the peace churches has been carried on by the American Friends Service

Committee. This group is closely allied, but not officially, with the Religious Society of Friends. Founded in 1917 by Quakers to provide an alternative to Quaker youths faced with a conflict between their beliefs in nonviolence and requirements for military service by the United States government, the organization became widely known for its relief efforts in World War I and World War II. In a sympathetic article in the Wall Street Journal, Elliot Carlson, a staff reporter for the newspaper, spoke of their work in Vietnam as follows: "The Committee's involvement in Vietnam illustrates its two-pronged approach to conflicts. Besides paying for medical supplies for war victims in both North and South Vietnam, the AFSC has sent members to work on relief projects in South Vietnam and is seeking approval to send members on similar missions to North Vietnam."<sup>2</sup>

The work of the American Friends Service Committee is not limited to service projects. The Committee has been an outspoken critic of United States policy ever since its involvement there in 1954 at the time of Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Conference. At that time the Committee issued a statement warning against United States military involvement in these terms: "The American Friends Service Committee is profoundly disturbed with the pressures for United States military intervention in Indochina. On the basis of long Quaker experience in international service we are convinced that nothing but disaster lies down this road. The destructiveness of modern war can produce nothing but hatred, even

among those on whose behalf the fighting ostensibly is undertaken, and hatred is no foundation upon which freedom and democracy can be built. We urge our fellow citizens to remember that a real victory for freedom in Indo-China, as elsewhere, depends upon winning the minds and hearts of the Indo-Chinese. This requires that America first understand that the legitimate yearnings of Asian peoples are for independence and for a better standard of life. These are the fundamental issues in the present raging Indo-Chinese revolution and they are not issues that can be met by military threats."<sup>3</sup>

In December of 1964, the American Friends Service Committee reaffirmed its opposition to United States military involvement in Vietnam, and sent copies of "Vietnam: The Fourth Course" reprinted from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, to over one thousand influential persons including President Lyndon B. Johnson. The author of this article pointed to the cooperation of hostile nations in planning international development of the Mekong River Valley under the auspices of the United Nations and suggested that this activity represented a possible basis for negotiation and neutralization of Southeast Asia. The State Department and the White House responded by saying that this "was not a viable option until the political and military situation was more secure".<sup>4</sup>

In October of 1965 the American Friends Service Committee issued "An Appeal for the People of Vietnam", a statement calling for all parties to subscribe to a cease fire and

enter into negotiations. From November 6, 1965, to January 20, 1966, a working committee of the American Friends Service Committee studied the complex problem of ending reliance on military force and published its report entitled: Peace in Vietnam: A New Approach in Southeast Asia. Since then the Board of Directors of the American Friends Service Committee has taken ads in the New York Times including statements entitled "For Peace in Vietnam" and "What Days are Holy?". In addition the Quakers have been doing extensive work on the draft and the right to conscientious objection. (The problem of the draft is discussed later in this chapter). It can be seen from this brief survey that the work of the Society of Friends has been one of the moving forces in the concern for peace in American Christianity.

Of similar importance but somewhat lesser significance has been the work of the Mennonite Church. Through the work of their relief organization called the Mennonite Central Committee and their Committee of Concern on Vietnam, the Mennonites have maintained missionaries in Vietnam since 1951, ministering to the needs of the Vietnamese people especially in the Saigon area. The Mennonites have been traditionally pacifist and in recent years have added their voice to the Friends in protest of the military action of the United States in Vietnam. While the Mennonites do not have a great deal of influence on the American public their witness to the cause of peace and their humanitarian efforts in wartorn Vietnam have been an example and a judgement upon the mainstream of

American Christianity.

In spite of the fine example of these two churches, the vast majority of American Christians are not pacifists. Most of the churches in the United States reject pacificism as a simplistic approach to foreign affairs and international relations. Normative American Protestantism has been greatly influenced by the debates in the churches during World War II, and the argument of Reinhold Niebuhr that the responsible Christian must be a political realist and oppose evil even through the use of force, carries considerable weight. The experience of Nazi Germany taught most of the church that it is often necessary to "do the best of the worse" even if this means compromising some Christian principles, in particular the commandment not to kill another human being. Situation ethics which has become popular of late also supports the thesis that absolute pacificism may be irresponsible in certain situations at certain times. Nevertheless the various peace groups within the major denominations have tended to have a pacifist orientation. Since they have often provided the strongest witness for the cause of peace, we ought to take a look at them.

Most of the denominational peace groups are affiliated in one way or another with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. This non-denominational organization was originally founded in 1916 to perform functions similar to the American Friends Service Committee but with a broader membership base. The Fellowship has been active in the Vietnam crisis, both by

providing relief for both North and South Vietnamese and also by its strong opposition to the use of military force. The Fellowship of Reconciliation has generally maintained a position of religious and humanistic pacificism throughout its history.

The denominational peace groups which generally started as pacifist fellowships have broadened their membership base to include those who may not be absolute pacifists but who oppose the use of force in modern warfare, particularly in Vietnam. At the present time these denominational peace fellowships have been maintaining a lobby against the war within their own denominations. Peace fellowships are found among the following denominations: Baptist, Catholic, Disciples, Episcopalians, Methodists, Jews, Lutherans, Reformed Church and Presbyterians, both north and south. They are unofficial groups within these denominations, attempting to further the cause of peace by non-violent action.

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship is fairly representative of these denominational peace groups. Although small in size (less than a thousand members) it has exerted influence in promoting anti-war resolutions within the Episcopal Church. The following policy statement of the fellowship represents their present position:

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship was organized as the Episcopal Pacifist Fellowship on November 11, 1939, at the Church of The Incarnation in New York City. It is an association of members of the Episcopal Church which has grown out of the conflict between the teachings of Jesus Christ and the

institution of war. It endeavors to create within the Episcopal Church an effective body of Episcopalians pledged to renounce participation in war so far as possible and to work for reconciliation and the increase of peace and good will in personal, economic, interracial and international life. It is concerned to develop the concept of nonviolence as a political equivalent of war and a form of force that will not be incompatible with the mind of Christ. 5

Within the past few years there have been a growing number of organizations, discussions and conferences by representatives of religious bodies on the problems of war and peace. The Council of Religion and International Affairs (formerly the Church Peace Union), the Church Peace Mission, the Catholic Association for International Peace and the Christian Peace Conference have all held periodic conferences and dialogues. However, in general, there has been little inter-religious confrontation on these issues in American Christianity. Recognizing the need for greater dialogue along ecumenical lines, Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Dr. Dana McLean Greeley of the Unitarian Universalist Association, asked Roman Catholic Bishop John J. Wright of Pittsburgh, Methodist Bishop John Wesley Lord of Washington, Episcopal Bishop Daniel J. Corrigan and others to help plan a Religious Leaders Conference on Peace. Meeting at the Church Center for the United Nations in mid-January, 1965, these men issued a call to the churches to send representatives to a National Inter-Religious Conference on Peace to be held on March 15-17, 1966 in Washington, D.C.

Almost five hundred clergy and laymen attended the con-



ference and heard addresses including those by John C. Bennett, Jacob J. Weinstein, John J. Wright and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. Position papers on the subjects of "Living with the Changing Communist World", "China and the Conflict in Asia", "Intervention: Morality and Limits", were presented and adopted. With regard to Vietnam the conference called upon the administration to:

1. Consider an immediate halt to the bombing of Vietnam
2. Announce the readiness of the United States to join in a cease-fire of indefinite duration.
3. Pursue every avenue toward negotiations
4. Not commit the United States to further escalation
5. Agree to representation by the National Liberation Front
6. Promote social and economic progress in South Vietnam
7. Continue providing funds for economic development of Southeast Asia.<sup>6</sup>

The Conference also agreed to continue the work of the Inter-Religious Committee on Peace and to convene world, national, regional, inter-religious conferences on peace. The proceedings of the conference have been published in a book edited by Homer Jack, entitled Religion and Peace.<sup>7</sup>

The inter-religious peace group most influential in gaining public support of churchmen for a change in policy on Vietnam, has been the National Emergency Committee known as Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. Founded in the winter of 1965-66, the committee was originally named Clergy

Concerned about Vietnam, but expanded in the spring of 1966 to include interested laymen. Originally the group was formed by the work of the Rev. William Sloan Coffin, the temporary executive secretary of the committee, and by the Rev. Daniel Berrigan, a Roman Catholic, the Rev. Richard Neuhaus, a Lutheran and Rabbi Lloyd Tennenbaum. The first action of the committee was to send the following telegram to President Johnson:

We are appalled by the inhumanity of the war in Vietnam and the extension of hostilities to neighboring countries. Impending national decisions about Vietnam will fundamentally influence the political, military, and above all, moral future of our nation and world. We are heartened by your efforts for peace, and we urge:

(1) that the cessation of bombing in North Vietnam be maintained;

(2) that you continue to press for a negotiated peace, and that the National Liberation Front be given direct representation in all discussions;

(3) that you vigorously resist all pressure toward further escalation;

(4) that economic development for humane purposes at home and abroad be given budgetary priority over military spending.<sup>8</sup>

The position expressed in the telegram served as the basis for the committee's activities. The next step the committee took was to establish local committees in the major cities of the United States. As a result of a massive telephone campaign, new members were added to give the committee a broader geographic and interfaith representation. The city and state committees were asked to undertake the following activities:

- (1) Call public meetings of clergy as soon as possible;
- (2) Obtain signed statements backing the efforts of the government to negotiate a Vietnam peace;
- (3) Send signed statements to President Johnson and to senators and representatives;
- (4) Visit and discuss with local congressmen the necessity for a negotiated peace and the dangers of escalation;
- (5) Preach sermons on the moral implications of the war and of United States involvement;
- (6) Obtain petitions from laymen commending the President on his peace-seeking efforts and encouraging him to hold the line against escalation.<sup>9</sup>

On April 1, 1966, having received funds and national support from interested clergy and laymen, the committee engaged the Rev. Richard Fernandez as full time executive secretary and changed the name to Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, a National Emergency Committee. Soon thereafter plans were made for a national mobilization of clergy and laymen to be held in Washington on January 31 to February 1, 1967.

The mobilization was an impressive gathering. Over two thousand people attended including representation from most of the fifty states and all the major denominations. The program consisted of speeches by such religious leaders as Bishop John Wesley Lord of Washington, The Rev. William Sloan Coffin, Yale University Chaplain, The Rev. Robert McAfee Brown, Professor at Stanford University, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, Professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, and the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Episcopal Suffragan Bishop of Washington. In addition addresses were given by Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska, Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota. Subsequent

to the conference, in the fall of 1967, Senator McCarthy declared his intention to seek the Democratic nomination for president against Lyndon Johnson. Senator McCarthy has chosen to run on a peace platform and many observers have speculated that his decision was partly influenced by the enthusiastic response he received at this meeting. One interesting point is that McCarthy chose one of the organizers of the mobilization, Mr. Sam Brown, a seminarian at Harvard Divinity School, to be his campaign manager on college campuses. The mobilization included visits of constituents with their senators and congressmen. Probably the most impressive demonstration of the mobilization was a silent vigil for peace in front of the White House on January 31. This demonstration of concern by thousands of religious leaders received nationwide attention on television and in the press. Following the conference, the committee published a book entitled Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience with articles by Robert McAfee Brown, Abraham Heschel and Michael Novak; the book is already in its third printing. The conference also endorsed a statement entitled "The Religious Community and the War in Vietnam".

By the time the committee held its second mobilization on February 5 and 6, 1968, the course of the war had escalated and the administration's position had solidified to the point where appeal to the President no longer seemed effective. A year of anti-war activity, including Vietnam Summer sponsored by Martin Luther King and others, and the growing strength of draft resistance among college students and seminarians,

combined with the candidacy of Eugene McCarthy to encourage the committee to take stronger action. In the fall of 1967 the committee publicly supported draft resistance as a means to oppose the war and at the conference in 1968 they released copies of the book, In The Name of America. This book, containing approximately 1,000 items from individual newspapers, press services and magazines, documents case after case of war crimes committed by the United States and the South Vietnamese government in Vietnam. A commentary signed by 29 religious leaders states that in Vietnam the United States "must be judged guilty of having broken almost every established agreement for standards of human decency in times of war."<sup>10</sup>

Having planned a memorial service at the Arlington National Cemetery with meditations by Bishop Charles Golden, Dr. Martin Luther King, Bishop John Lord and Bishop James Shannon, the group was forced to change its plans when the United States Court of Appeals upheld an army decision to prohibit holding the service on the grounds that it constituted "special pleading". "Instead a vigil of silent prayers replaced the full-scale memorial service that the organization had hoped to hold in the cemetery's white marble amphitheater."<sup>11</sup> The vigil of over 2,500 people at the cemetery dramatized the extent of concern for the devastation to the United States and Vietnam caused by the war.

The efforts of these various denominational and inter-religious peace groups have served to confront the churches in America with both the issue of war and peace, and the

corollary concern over the inequities of the present draft law. The concluding section of this chapter presents the action taken by the official bodies of some of the churches in response to the concerns expressed by these groups. However, before proceeding to this subject we should examine more closely the concern of students and seminarians over the issue of the draft, for this concern has served to demand that the churches take another look at the increasing cost of the war to the stability of American society and the aims and ideals of its young people. The subject of the war and the draft has focused the church's attention on the crisis of conscience caused by the war in Vietnam.

#### The War and the Draft

On October 16, 1967, over one thousand young men either returned their draft cards to the selective service system or burned the cards, in protest to the United States policy on Vietnam. This symbolic act of protest served to demonstrate the extent to which young people were opposed to this war. It also pointed out their disillusionment with the procedures of the Selective Service System in conscripting men for military service. It is an established fact that the major burden of fighting the war has been laid upon those without the means or ability to be deferred, namely the poor and the negroes. Although some prophetic individuals, such as David Miller, David Harris and Thomas Lee Hayes,

had taken this action earlier and over one hundred men took similar action on April 15, 1967 in Central Park's Sheep Meadow in New York City, the October 16 draft card turn in represented the first nationwide effort of this kind.

In Boston alone, over 2,000 people joined in a rally on the Boston Common, and a Service of Conscience and Acceptance in the Arlington Street Unitarian Church, in support of the 250 men resisting the draft. Religious non-cooperators at the service included eight from Boston University School of Theology, five from Harvard Divinity School, four from the Episcopal Theological School, two each from St. John's Seminary (Roman Catholic) and Andover Newton Theological School and one from Crane School of Theology. In addition to these, two seminarians, two ministers, one priest and one professor from Crane turned over their cards. In other cities twenty-five seminarians at Union Seminary in New York City twenty-five seminarians at Yale Divinity School and over twenty other seminarians from the mid-and far west joined the Resistance, as this anti-draft group chose to call itself. In total over one hundred seminarians and ministers took this action during the week of October 16 to 20, 1967.

Most of the faculty of the seminarians' schools issued statements of support even though not all of the professors agreed with the specific action taken. The faculties of Harvard Divinity School, Union Theological School and The Episcopal Theological School all supported their students. The statement of the Episcopal Theological School is typical.

Though differing in their assessments of the particular action taken, the Faculty of the Episcopal Theological School would record in its minutes its support within the Body of Christ of the four members of the school whose conviction led them this week to surrender their draft cards. We live in a time of crisis and change which is inevitably going to result in varied actions within the Christian fellowship, as well as in great differences of conviction. We simply want to go on record as respecting Christian conviction that results in actions involving courage and risk.<sup>12</sup>

The growth of resistance to the draft has continued as a result of similar activities on November 16 and December 4, 1967 and April 3, 1968. To date over 2,500 persons have taken this means of opposing the war in Vietnam. This action on the part of seminarians, clergy and Christian laymen has served to focus attention on the issue of the war. Moreover, it has confronted the church with questions of the relationship of obedience to the state to obedience to conscience. It has challenged the church on the morality of 4-D exemptions for clergy and seminarians. It has raised once again the right of conscientious objection to military service, particularly on a non-religious or selective basis. It has called into question the whole relationship between church and state and has caused the church to reexamine its whole position with regard to war and peace and the government's right of military conscription. It now remains to continue our study by examining the response to the war in Vietnam on the part of some of the official ecclesiastical bodies of the church.



### The Church Awakens

The church in America with all its bulk and its diversity is not generally a very effective means for prophetic witness. A peculiar form of pietism, inherited from the Puritans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the enthusiasts of the nineteenth century, has inhibited the churches from speaking out on the major social issues of our time. However, there is some evidence that the church is awakening from her slumber of a previous age. The participation of clergy and laity in the civil rights movement of the sixties has demonstrated that the church can act positively in seeking social reform. The belated entrance of the church in the civil rights struggle has helped to break down the old cliché of non-involvement. The tragic war in Vietnam has also called the church to involvement in the affairs of the world. Perhaps it is a sign of the church's new maturity that it has begun to take this responsibility seriously. Now the symbolic and representative leaders of American Christianity have begun to see the church as an instrument of God's peace and are reflecting the concern over the war in Vietnam in statements and policies of official bodies of the church.

Foremost of the leaders for the cause of peace have been the two great Popes of the Roman Catholic Church. Both Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI have worked in this cause. When John convened the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962,

he thrust the Roman Catholic Church into the midst of the great social change taking place in our time. The results of the Council represent a major reformation in the church and have expanded the activities of Roman Catholics across denominational lines. One of the major effects has been the cooperation of Roman Catholic bishops, priests and laymen in the peace movement in America. Throughout the term of his office, Pope John worked toward establishing the conditions for peace in the world. In his encyclical Mater et Magistra, he appealed to "economically developed nations to come to the aid of those which were in the process of development."<sup>13</sup> In Pacem in Terris, his "Encyclical on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty", he affirmed that "peace on earth, which all men of every era have most eagerly yearned for, can be firmly established only if the order laid down by God be dutifully observed."<sup>14</sup>

Gibson Winter, commenting on Pacem in Terris, has said

The historic encyclical of Pope John XXIII holds out the promise of world community, asserting the rights and duties of man upon which such an order is founded. We are increasingly sensitive to the contraction of space in the world, to the growing interdependence of economic and scientific communities and to the dependence of all national states on peaceful solutions to their differences if the world is to escape massive destruction. We are likewise sensitive to the amassing of armaments and to the increasing divisions of rich and poor countries. In this context, the encyclical furnishes an important corrective to peace movements which have preoccupied themselves with peace and overlooked the conditions of peace in a technological world. The encyclical focuses attention...on justice and the dignity of persons, spelling out in considerable detail pathways to a just world in which peace might prevail. 15

Pope John warned the world against an unstable and

unjust peace, but spoke strongly for the church's role in bringing about a world without war. When he died, in 1963, the whole world mourned the loss of a beloved leader. The mantle of this apostle of peace fell upon the new pope, Paul VI, who immediately began to continue the work of the church for peace. Even while the council was still meeting, Pope Paul set out on his mission. On October 4, 1965, Pope Paul VI, the spiritual leader of the world's Roman Catholics, came to the United States to present his message before President Johnson and the Secretary of the United Nations, U Thant. In his address to the United Nations the Pope recalled the words of President John F. Kennedy, "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind."<sup>16</sup> He went on to say that there must be "no more war, war never again...It is peace that must guide the destinies of peoples and of all mankind."<sup>17</sup>

Almost a year later in his encyclical Christi Matri, Pope Paul reiterated his plea for peace in Southeast Asia. In the encyclical he stated,

The danger of a more serious and extensive calamity hangs over the human family and has increased, especially in parts of eastern Asia where a bloody and hard fought war is raging ... Now once again we raise our voice 'with a loud cry and with tears (Hebrews 5:7)' urgently beseeching those who rule over nations to do everything they can to see to it that the conflagration spreads no farther but rather is completely extinguished...Therefore, let all those responsible bring about the necessary conditions for the laying down of arms before the possibility of doing so is taken away by the pressure of events. 18

The bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in America

endorsed the plea for peace in Vietnam in a statement which reads in part:

We, the Catholic bishops of the United States, consider it our duty to help magnify the moral voice of our nation. This voice, fortunately, is becoming louder and clearer because it is the voice of all faiths. To the strong words of the National Council of Churches, the Synagogue Council of America and other religious bodies, we add our own plea for peace. Our approaches may at times differ, but our starting point (justice) and our goal (peace) do not. 19

The involvement of the church in the quest for peace in Vietnam has consistently been supported by both the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America and the World Council of Churches. The National Council of Churches has been particularly concerned with United States policy regarding both the conduct of the war and the issue of the right to dissent. In a policy statement adopted by the General Board on December 3, 1965, at Madison, Wisconsin, they stated that military force was not the solution to the problem in Vietnam. It also urged that the President "utilize mediation efforts by United Nations members, and especially by United Nations Secretary-General U Thant."<sup>20</sup> The statement included a message to the churches calling upon Christians in the United States to do three things.

1. Maintain our spiritual and ethical sensitivity and keep before us our awareness of the imperatives of the Christian gospel:

2. Let peace keeping be the priority of our Christian witness so that we may be truly children of God in these difficult times;

3. Support the efforts of the National Council of Churches in an approach to the World Council of Churches and Pope Paul VI in a common attempt to mobilize the worldwide Christian community in support of a just alternative to war. 21

In another policy statement adopted by the General Board on February 22, 1966, the Council called upon "all citizens to resist any effort to curtail freedom of speech, assembly and petition, especially in this time of international crisis and domestic conflict."<sup>22</sup> The statement also pointed out that

our government is also required to ensure its citizens the right of dissent, particularly in times of war or national emergency when civil liberties are threatened by strong pressure to present a united front. The right of dissent is a part of our nation's legal and cultural heritage and therein lies strength not weakness. 23

The statement also recognized the problem of the draft and agreed to study and urge its member churches to study the issues of dissent with special reference to "the profound disturbance of many young of draft age over the decisions they must make about military service."<sup>24</sup> The Council agreed to consider the possibility of "the creation of and participation in new alternative forms of service such as international peace forces and relief, reconstruction or development activities."<sup>25</sup>

Since then the National Council of Churches has continually urged American Christians to concern themselves with the problems of the war in Vietnam. In a meeting at

the end of 1966 the Council issued the following "Appeal to the Churches Concerning Vietnam":

The General Assembly of the National Council of Churches, in session in Miami Beach, Florida, December 9, 1966, issues this appeal to its member churches and their constituencies to pray for God's guidance as our nation seeks together with other concerned leaders to bring an end to the war in Vietnam. The assembly further appeals to the churches to expand their study, debate and action concerning

1. The scope and importance of the Vietnam war.
2. The need for flexibility and openness in the present situation.
3. The use of military power in Vietnam.
4. The need for international responsibility in securing peace.
5. The need for development and reconciliation. 26

In resolutions of the general board on September 25, 1967 and February 21, 1968, the Council has called for a new United States foreign policy based on justice, imperatives for peace and responsible use of power. The Council has become increasingly critical of United States policy in Vietnam and in recent months has become an outspoken critic of the use of military force to solve political problems. In both meetings the Council urged the United States government to stop the bombing of North Vietnam as a prelude to peace. Largely as a result of the leadership of the National Council the peace movement has become legitimized by many of the major protestant denominations. The work of the National Council served to encourage the World Council of Churches to begin to take a stand on the issue of the war in Vietnam.

Since 1965 both the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and the officers of the Commission of

the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), an agency of the World Council, have worked toward peace in Vietnam. Both by liason with the governments involved in the conflict, and by publicly stating its position on the war, the World Council of Churches has influenced more and more of its member churches to study and respond to the problem of Vietnam. In a report of the Central Committee from its meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, from February 8 to 17, 1966, the Council reaffirmed the influence of the National Council's proclamation upon it. The report stated,

Numerous National Councils have spoken, have exchanged views with one another and have made submissions to their governments. We note especially the continuing attention given to Vietnam by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, reflecting widespread questioning of the wisdom and rightness of the United States government's present policy and indicating new and more hopeful paths. 27

The Committee recommended that "possible ways of co-operation between the Vatican and the World Council should be explored." 28

Concerning the war itself the report stated that

the primary objective must be to stop the fighting as the most effective step to starting discussion and negotiations. This is not an easy task and we are not unaware of the deep rooted obstacles which have thus far prevented progress from the battlefield to the conference table. This is all the more urgent because by continuing the conflict both sides face acute problems - on the one hand the United States of America and its allies face increase of bitter racial and other resentments against the United States of America and the west, and on the other hand the Vietnamese face the vast destruction of their people and resources. The prospect of victory at the end of the conflict does not justify the

inevitable cost. 29

The report recommended the United States stop bombing North Vietnam, begin to withdraw its troops, that the National Liberation Front be a party to negotiations, and that a cease-fire be agreed upon and enforced by the International Control Commission consisting of India, Canada and Poland.

These points were reiterated and expanded at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council, in session at Windsor in February 1967. In a statement adopted at this meeting six inter-related points were made including proposals that

the United States stop the bombing of North Vietnam; North Vietnam indicate by word and deed its readiness to move toward negotiations and South Vietnam move toward negotiations and agree to representation of the National Liberation Front; and the U.S.S.R. and the United Kingdom, as continuing co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, intensify their efforts to bring about a cessation of the conflict. 30

Copies of the statement were sent to the governments directly concerned.

In the 1967 annual meeting, from August 15 to 26 at Crete, Greece, of the Central Committee the statement of the Executive Committee was reaffirmed with additions made at the meeting. Part of the addition included the following paragraph:

The immediate and ongoing duty which rests upon all who are concerned with peace making in South East Asia, is to press steadily and urgently for bringing the escalation of the war in Vietnam to a halt, for the reversal of the present military trend, and for conditions where the people of Vietnam may work for the solution of their own problems without



foreign intervention. The United States can make a contribution by committing itself again publicly to withdrawal of troops. A satisfactory final solution will only come when all foreign intervention has ceased. 31

Although the statement was adopted, seven members recorded negative votes and issued a minority statement as follows.

I include the whole statement because it is such a strong indictment of United States Policy.

The World Council of Churches has repeatedly emphasized the acute concern of Christians over the conflict in Vietnam. The World Council of Churches has shown its solidarity with the suffering of the people of Vietnam. The World Council of Churches has acknowledged that the duty of a Christian is to demand the cessation of the escalation of the war in Vietnam. World Council of Churches has drawn attention to many negative consequences of the continuing cruel war. World Council of Churches has also acknowledged the right of the Vietnamese people to solve their own problems without foreign intervention.

However in various statements of the World Council of Churches on Vietnam a tendency can be seen to evade the question of the real causes of the war in Vietnam and to ignore the solution of the conflict.

That is why we consider, that from our point of view, the origin of the Vietnam tragedy is the entirely unjustified intervention of the United States of America in the internal life of the Vietnamese people. The withdrawal of the American troops from the territory of Vietnam, without any condition, is absolutely necessary and the Vietnam problem must be settled on the basis of the Geneva agreements. 32

The statement was signed by Bishop Bartha, Metropolitan Nikodim, Archbishop Philaret, Bishop Vladimir, Archpriest Voronov, Professor Zabolotsky and Bishop Kaldy.

The role that the councils have played in the church's response to Vietnam should not be underestimated. They have served to arouse the lethargic mass of Christianity in America to find new opportunities to study, evaluate and

respond to the war in Vietnam. As the war has escalated over the past three years the councils have become increasingly critical of the presence of the United States in Vietnam. The criticism of United States policy has reached the point where the major protestant denominations in America have been forced to deal with the question of Vietnam. This has also produced a new concern over the right of dissent and even civil disobedience and a reevaluation of the present draft system. Taking the Episcopal Church as representative of the actions of American Protestantism we can see this growing concern expressed in the official gatherings of the church.

Many churchmen approach the situation in Vietnam and the issue of the draft from the perspective of the church's resolution of the problem of World War II. It was during the late 1930's and early 1940's that the church began to come to grips with the problem of war and the right of conscientious objection. The fact that the vast majority of Christians supported the allied effort to oppose Hitler's Third Reich, did not preclude the right of some individuals to refuse to fight on religious grounds. However, the effect of the tyranny of Nazi Germany and the need to resist and contain Hitler's aggression was to destroy the sentimental and unrealistic pacifism held before the war. The problem with this absolute pacifism was that it overlooked the reality of sin and assumed, in effect, that if you loved your enemy he would love you. Reinhold Niebuhr criticized this view

as utopian and most of the church accepted his argument. It was during World War II, however, that the government extended the right of conscientious objection to any person who had a religious basis of objection to war whether he be a member of a "peace church" or not. Thus, the General Convention and the National Council of the Episcopal Church, and most of the major denominations, made provisions for conscientious objectors within its membership. The Convention passed resolutions in 1934 and 1940, affirming the right of conscientious objection within the Episcopal Church.

While most people regarded this as a reasonable solution to the problems of World War II, many fail to realize that the situation today is not the same as the one twenty-five years ago. Because of the questionable nature of the Vietnam conflict, we find many men refusing to serve in the war. They are not necessarily absolute pacifists. Generally, their position is one of conscientious objection to this particular war. Christians have also begun to recognize the right to refuse military service on ethical grounds which are not religious. In the famous Seegar case in 1965, the United States Supreme Court upheld the right of an individual to conscientious objection on non-religious grounds. The Episcopal Church endorsed this stand in its General Convention of 1967. However, neither the Episcopal Church nor the courts have yet recognized the right to serve in a particular war, such as Vietnam. A resolution on selective conscientious objection to particular wars failed to pass the

1967 General Convention, even though it was endorsed by both the House of Bishops and the clergy in the House of Deputies. It would appear that the Church has not yet overcome the absolutism of an earlier age.

The issue of war in general had received some attention in the period of time between Korea and Vietnam. The possibility of unlimited nuclear war has caused the church to take its responsibility as peace maker far more seriously than in the past. In 1962, for example, the House of Bishops issued a statement on the subject of war and peace. The statement urged the church and individual Christians to work "with all their strength for the prevention and elimination of war."<sup>33</sup> It endorsed the concept that "a strong military posture does serve as a deterrent to an aggressor nation intent upon military conflict."<sup>34</sup> However, the bishops failed to recognize, just as the United States government failed to recognize, that the concept of deterrent military force fails to take adequate account of guerilla wars of national liberation", such as Vietnam. All the nuclear firepower in the world does not seem to be a deterrent to a conflict such as the one in Vietnam, unless the government is willing to destroy the whole country with a full scale attack involving the use of nuclear weapons. Thus, the major concept of the bishops' statement is not completely applicable to the present situation in Vietnam.

The issue of Vietnam did not arise in the General Convention of 1964, but at the Convention in 1967 it was one of

the major considerations of the meeting. After a week of heated debate and agonizing discussion, the Convention passed a statement on Vietnam. The statement represents the real differences of opinion within the Church, and although many people consider it to be "lukewarm and confused" it reflects the state of the situation in the Church. A minority report, taking a stronger position against the United States' policy in Vietnam, was signed by twenty-four bishops. The minority statement read as follows:

Our consciences as Christians are deeply troubled by the growing terror of the undeclared war now raging in Vietnam, a concern expressed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the World Council of Churches, and therefore, the undersigned bishops of the Episcopal Church urge upon the President and the Congress of the United States that they cease the bombing in North Vietnam and employ every other means of de-escalation in order to terminate the undeclared war in Vietnam as soon as possible.<sup>35</sup>

The statement was signed by Bishops Crittenden (Erie), Gordon (Alaska), Marmion (Southwestern Virginia), Hall (New Hampshire), Pike (California, resigned), Bennison (Western Michigan), Millard (California, Suffragan) Davidson (Western Kansas), Scaife (Western New York), Walters (San Joaquin), Cole (Central New York, Coadjutor), DeWitt (Pennsylvania), Myers (California), Burt (Ohio, Coadjutor), Moore (Washington, Suffragan), Reed (Colombia, South America), Mills (Virgin Islands), Bayne (Overseas Department), Rath (Newark, Suffragan), Butterfield (Vermont), Mosley (Delaware), Corrigan (Home Department), Reus-Froylan (Puerto Rico), and Stark (Newark). The Convention did not deal specifically with the issue of civil disobedience in 1967 since in 1964 the House

of Bishops had issued an excellent statement on the subject.<sup>36</sup> The Department of Christian Social Relations of the Episcopal Church is currently working on a statement supporting those who for matters of conscience have turned in their draft cards, but the statement has not been released yet.

The position of the Episcopal Church is typical of most protestant denominations, although some have been more outspoken. It demonstrates the extent to which the challenge offered by the prophetic stand of the peace groups and the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches has influenced the thinking of the rest of the church. In this age of global interdependence, the church cannot fail to fulfil its responsibilities to work for the cause of peace and enhance the dignity of all mankind. For it is only when the church responds to these issues that it takes seriously its obligation to serve mankind following the example of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV  
THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Who Speaks for the Church?

Important as the issue of the war in Vietnam is for American Christianity, the controversy surrounding the growing response of the church to the war raises a larger issue, namely the relationship of the church to society as represented by the state. The debate over the relationship of the church to society has been given added fuel by the appearance in the fall of 1967 of a book by Paul Ramsey entitled, Who Speaks for the Church? In this critique of the Conference on Church and Society convened by the World Council of Churches in Geneva, July 12-25, 1966, Professor Ramsey argues that the church, as represented by the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and the denominational social action committees, too often yields to a passion of specific policy pronouncements on issues of public concern, and neglects more fundamental ethical and political analysis.<sup>1</sup> Thus, there is an attempt "to compile a Christian social ethic by leaping from one problem to another."<sup>2</sup> Ramsey maintains that the task of the church is not to make specific policy statements on such issues as the war in Vietnam, but rather to provide an ethical basis for Christian conduct in social affairs.

It is not the church's business to recommend but only to clarify the grounds upon which the statesman must put forth his own particular decree. Christian political ethics cannot

say what should or must be done but only what may be done...

In politics the church is only a theoretician. The religious communities as such should be concerned with perspectives upon politics, with political doctrine, with the direction and structures of the common life, not with specific directives. 3

Ramsey is not arguing that the church should stay out of politics, but he does question the wisdom of making specific statements on particular policies. Ramsey defends himself from the charge of ecclesiastical isolationism by affirming that the church does have a responsibility in the political life of its society. "The church has a proper role in addressing itself to the problems of political morality and the common life", he says, "We ought not to yield to those who say that the church should stay out of politics."<sup>4</sup> Ramsey, however, sees the task of the religious communities being "to see to it that the word over which and through which statesmanship or government wins its victory is not an inadequate word."<sup>5</sup>

In the October 30, 1967, issue of Christianity and Crisis, Roger L. Shinn, and John C. Bennett take exception to Ramsey's position and his critique of the conference. Shinn points out that the conference at Geneva "was not an effort to speak for the church. Its voting members were participants not delegates, gathered to think and speak to the World Council of Churches."<sup>6</sup> Shinn agrees with Ramsey in urging some Christian restraint in making pronouncements about public policy but he points out that the times as



"at the gates of Auschwitz" when the church must be utterly clear and specific are not as rare as Ramsey thinks they are. Shinn states that "the American church has too often refused to deal specifically with the evils of slavery, race prejudice and military action. Throughout the fabric of our common life are specific evils to be condemned, wrongs to be righted, acts of mercy to be accomplished. It will not do for the church studios to replace the church militant."<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Bennett stated that while he agrees with much of Ramsey's methodology that the greater part of what church bodies say should be in the middle area where theology and social ethics overlap, he is doubtful about securing full agreement about theological foundations due to the pluralistic theological situation we live in. Bennett says that "it is fortunate that in spite of this theological pluralism it is possible to agree over a wide spectrum on some of those theological and ethical issues that are most relevant to the church's social responsibility."<sup>8</sup> However, Bennett sees specific forms of teaching and action related to the concrete decisions of government, as a sign that the basic teaching is taken seriously. Bennett concludes his criticism of Ramsey by pointing out that

it is on rare occasions that anyone speaks for the church. To be concerned with the danger raised by Ramsey's title is a pruristic preoccupation that may be quite sterile. What we should be concerned about is the encouragement of many corporate voices in the church speaking to its members, to nations and governments. 9

My own main criticism of Ramsey's argument is that he presupposes that when the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches or the denominational bodies of the church speak out on social issues, they do in fact speak for the church. Whether this would be a desirable situation is debatable, but the fact remains that protestant Christianity and to an increasing extent the Roman Catholic Church is anything but monolithic in its opinions or the expression of them. I may want the church to unanimously condemn United States policy in Vietnam, and Professor Ramsey may prefer that they endorse it or at least not criticize it, but the truth is that seldom in its long history, at least since the reformation, has the church been able to find general agreement over any social issue. Certainly the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches do not presume to speak on behalf of their member churches. Even the pronouncements of the official representative denominational bodies are unlikely to receive much support in the parish if the members of the congregation are not in agreement with them.

Thus, the question remains, who does speak for the church? I think that the answer lies not in the national and international, denominational and interdenominational bodies but rather in the hearts and minds of the individual Christians and the local religious communities of the parish or congregation. The parish may be a dying form of church structure but until something replaces it, it is the basic unit of the

church particularly in America. The most that the Councils of churches and the national denominational bodies can do is to attempt to inform, educate and appeal to the local parish for support. In this sense the main function of the larger bodies is to lead the dioceses and parishes in such a way that they can come to understand the issues and to act in a responsible way to them. The church speaks when its general membership has become convinced of a particular social position and can agree on action to be taken. This was true in the civil rights movement and it will be true in the peace movement as well.

The responsibility of the church rests in the efforts made to inform the people of the church in an effort to help them respond to the social situation in a Christian way. There are many ways to accomplish this task. The remainder of this chapter deals with a specific case in which the issue of the war in Vietnam was dramatically brought to the attention of a typical suburban parish in Massachusetts.

#### Chronology of a Controversy

On October 16, 1967, the Rev. Michael Jupin, a deacon in the Episcopal Church and the assistant minister at the Church of the Epiphany in Winchester, Massachusetts, returned his draft card to the selective service system in protest to the United States policy on Vietnam. In the weeks and months which followed this act was to have profound effect upon the life and work of the parish and on Mr. Jupin's ministry.

within that community. The controversy and conflict which have evolved since October have not been fully resolved, but have become a part of the parish's attempt to deal with some of the major issues confronting the church today, particularly the issue of the war in Vietnam.

The Episcopal church in Winchester, Massachusetts, is representative of the upper middle class, suburban churches surrounding our country's major cities. It is a large parish with over 1,600 baptized members, 1,100 communicants consisting of 525 families. The affluence of the community is reflected in the church buildings and the annual budget of 90 to 95 thousand dollars. The present rector, the Rev. John J. Bishop, has served the parish a little more than two years. The assistant minister, the Rev. J. Michael Jupin, was called to the parish after his ordination to the diaconate in June, 1967, having served the previous year as a seminarian working in the parish. In general the members of the parish are well educated, most are college graduates and take a moderate position on social issues.

When Mr. Jupin, along with over 250 other young men, turned in his draft card at the Arlington Street Church in Boston, the Church of the Epiphany was thrust right into the middle of the controversy over the war in Vietnam. This was not the first time the parish had been exposed to the issue of the war. In January of 1967, the rector, Mr. Bishop, had attended a conference in Washington, D. C., sponsored by the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam. This group

opposed the war on moral grounds and made its position known in a public statement which Mr. Bishop made available to all parishoners. After Mr. Bishop returned from the conference, he preached a sermon on the subject of the Vietnam war in which he raised moral and political questions regarding the present administration's policy in the war. Later in the spring, during Lent, Arthur Walmsley, the director of Christian Social Relations of the Episcopal Church, gave an address on the issue of the war. The purpose of his address was to focus the issue of moral concern from a Christian perspective. At this same time the social responsibility committee of the parish struggled with the problems of providing aid to various victims of the war.

In spite of this preparation, when Mr. Jupin chose to step over the line which separates lawful dissent from unlawful resistance, many parishoners were deeply shocked. Although the issue of the war had been presented to the parish, the discussion had not extended to a consideration of the draft and the right of conscience when in conflict with the laws of the nation. While some of the parishoners previously may have been dismayed and annoyed by outspoken anti-war sermons, many became indignant and increasingly hostile when they realized that not only were some churches being used for anti-war demonstrations but that their own minister had participated in these events.<sup>10</sup>

The parish was officially informed of Mr. Jupin's actions in their newspaper, The Three Crowns, which all

members received on October 19. The following Saturday the rector met with the two wardens, and a request was made to ask Mr. Jupin to resign. Mr. Bishop replied that if the parish wanted to fire his assistant, they would have to fire him first. The matter was dropped. On Sunday, October 22, Mr. Bishop made a formal statement from the pulpit in which he expressed his support for his assistant. The following Thursday, October 26, a special vestry meeting was called to discuss the crisis situation in the parish. During the previous week, the Dean of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, John. B. Coburn, had advised Mr. Bishop that the situation was "Twentieth Century material for grace", and Mr. Arthur Walmsley who had spoken to the parish in Lent, offered the assistance of the support of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church if needed. The discussion of the vestry regarding the situation in the parish as a result of Mr. Jupin's action was open and honest. According to the minutes of the meeting, "the majority of those present felt that the act was not in the best of taste although (they felt) Mr. Jupin was within his rights as an individual to take such action."<sup>11</sup> At the meeting it was decided that Mr. Bishop should preach on the subject on the following Sunday, October 29.

Mr. Bishop has described the sermon as being "traumatic". He began his sermon by discussing church involvement in the peace movement. Then while the rector remained in the pulpit, Mr. Jupin spoke for ten minutes from the lecturn

explaining his reasons for turning in his draft card. Mr. Bishop concluded the sermon and the worship service and a meeting was held in the parish house with over 250 people present. At this informal meeting both the rector and the wardens spoke to the issue and people were asked to respond in writing. To date over 125 written reactions have been received by the rector. It is interesting to note the following analysis of these written reactions:

10% - Parishioners totally opposed to Mr. Jupin's turning in his draft card.

15% - Parishioners not yet satisfied that the action was proper but who remain open to conviction.

70% - Parishioners accepting though not agreeing with Mr. Jupin's explanation for this symbolic act of dissention.

5% - Parishioners totally in favor of this particular bit of anti-war activity. 12

This was not the end of the matter, however. In the weeks that followed discussion continued. During this time the dissent of the parish seemed to polarize around the Junior Warden, a retired admiral, Mr. Burracker. While Mr. Burracker represented the more responsible critics, some parishioners became increasingly incensed and began to abstain from communion and accused Mr. Jupin of taking drugs and made other attacks on his character. As a result his ministry, which had been primarily involved with the youth of the parish, was severely curtailed. It was agreed by the clergy and wardens that further discussion was necessary to help

heal the schism which was developing in the parish. To this end it was agreed at the regularly scheduled vestry meeting of November 15 that the Bishop of the Diocese, Anson P. Stokes, be asked to preach at the services on November 26. Meanwhile two vestrymen had resigned their positions and the situation was becoming critical. Concern was also expressed by the vestry that the annual canvassing of pledges might be affected by the situation and that a brief statement regarding the situation be mailed to all parishoners with the canvass material.<sup>13</sup>

Up to this time the Boston press had agreed to withhold publicity on the incident in order to allow this parish to deal with the problem. However, it was now agreed that the press ought to be allowed to use the story if it so desired. On November 24 a series of articles in the Boston Globe and the Herald-Traveler released the news to the general public. (Some of these articles have been included in the appendix.) On November 28, in an editorial, the Boston Globe commended Mr. Jupin as a "brave and honorable man". The following Sunday, the Sunday Herald-Traveler ran a feature article on the crisis of conscience in our churches.<sup>14</sup> All in all the press coverage was fair and helped to present the issues involved to the public.

On November 26, the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts preached to the congregation of the Church of the Epiphany on the subject of "The Church and War". Regarding Mr. Jupin the bishop said,



The Rev. Mr. Jupin in his action at least reminds us of the complexity and importance of some of the issues. He let us hear clearly what many are saying secretly. He is concerned on a conscientious basis with a great contemporary issue. If we do not approve the form his protest takes, at least we can learn from his action the depth of concern of many people. I am sure that he is willing to recognize that on these issues no man can have easy or altogether satisfactory answers. I am sure that he is willing to bear the legal costs he may have to bear. He has not been furtive. He can help make us think and I believe we can trust the processes of thought and discussion. 15

With this meeting the matter was officially closed. However, the seeds of discontent have not entirely dissipated. Whether the possibility of a trial and jail sentence for Mr. Jupin will reopen the whole controversy remains to be seen. Whether this experience has been a creative one or was merely destructive to the life, work and ministry of the parish cannot be fully ascertained at this time. However, it seems to me that there are many things that can be learned about the parish ministry from this example. In the following section I will attempt to draw on the experience of this parish and to analyze the role of the prophetic element in a pastoral setting. This is not an unusual incident in the protestant churches today and unless I am wrong it will continue to become more common as the church attempts to confront the major social issues of our time. Unless the members of our churches learn to make creative use of conflict and direct the energies of its members to constructive rather than destructive tasks such controversies as this will be ultimately meaningless.

## Change, Conflict and Controversy in the Church

"As they left the garden, Adam is alleged to have said, 'Eve, we are living in an era of transition.'"<sup>16</sup> From the beginning of time man has been confronted by change and he has usually responded to it by trying to ignore it. In the last century mankind has faced an acceleration of change, with the result that people have fled to the church as the one stable element in a changing world. Yet today the winds of change have even penetrated the thick stone walls of our ecclesiastical establishments. After a half century of dormancy the church has begun to respond to the social changes of our society. Having awakened to the need to become relevant to the modern world the church has tried to revive old forms of witness in new ways. The new liturgy, the new theology, and the new morality represent just a few of the attempts of the church to keep up with the changing times. Yet we must ask whether this is enough.

At no time in their history have the Christian churches in America been as much the subject of critical appraisal as they are today. Since 1960 an unprecedented flow of popular and scholarly books and articles have appeared demeaning the significance of the church in contemporary life, and challenging church leaders to articulate a meaningful role for religion in the modern world...The primary thrust of criticism does not represent so much a quarrel with basic Christian beliefs and values as an intense concern that the church has betrayed its moral obligation to seek the implementation of those beliefs and values in everyday life. 17

This quotation from a book recently published by the University of California Press sums up the major problem

facing our churches today. The authors go on to examine the two major tasks facing the church and this forms the basis for the title, To Comfort and to Challenge.

The contemporary church in America seems to be called to a two-fold ministry. "From the time of Christ, the church has sought both to comfort and to challenge; to care for the 'halt, the lame, and the blind' and those who are 'weary and heavy-laden', but also to make the church meaningful and influential in daily life. The contemporary church still seems committed to serve both functions."<sup>18</sup> The problem is that the the two functions at first glance seem to contradict each other. Can the church become involved in rapid social change, with the resulting conflict and controversy and at the same time fulfil its pastoral obligations to society? It seems to me that if the church is to be anything more than a "twentieth century comfort station" it must learn how to reconcile this dilemma.

Lyle E. Schaller writing in his book, Community Organization: Conflict and Reconciliation, maintains that the spirit of reconciliation is compatible with the conflict of social change. He maintains that if the Christian acts in a spirit of reconciliation he can resort to nonviolent conflict to effect social change, without the conflict degenerating into violence. In the case of community organization, or for that matter involvement in any controversial issue the church has a responsibility to act as a reconciler without destroying the creative process of change involved in the conflict.

The primary purpose of community organization is to help individuals develop and use the resources God has given in controlling their own destiny and the destiny of their communities. This may require the use of conflict; it may result in an increase in the degree of alienation. The unique task of the church is to add to this process the dimensions of love, justice, redemption, reconciliation, mercy and the judgement of God. 19

While Schaller is specifically speaking about the relationship of the church to community organization, the same principles apply to the church and the peace movement, or the civil rights program, or the problem of poverty. By committing itself to the process of social change in the spirit of reconciliation the church is in a position both to comfort and to challenge.

The situation of the church in Winchester is illustrative of the basic conflict in our churches today. Here it was obvious that a conflict situation was produced by the involvement of both the rector and the assistant minister in anti-war activity. However, it was not until a major confrontation occurred in the act of Mr. Jupin's turning in his draft card that the issue was clearly defined. In some churches of a more conservative constituency the mere fact that the preacher raises a question over United States foreign policy from the pulpit may produce a strong reaction in the parish. In the case of Winchester, the rector has already preached on the subject of war and peace, and apparently the parish was able to assimilate the issue into its life without any major disruptions. However, it may have been that some members of the congregation had merely

suppressed its disagreement with Mr. Bishop's position only to express their hostility when Mr. Jupin crystalized the issue by his radical action.

Certain elements of the situation may have caused the parish to react more strongly in this particular situation. The fact that Mr. Jupin was a member of the clergy and in part represented the parish was undoubtedly a factor. Had the issue of civil disobedience evolved as a result of the action of a lay member of the congregation it would have been less controversial. The element of surprise was also a factor. Had the parish been informed of Mr. Jupin's intention before the act there may have been more opportunity for discussion. While there was some preparation on the issue of war and peace, the parish had not dealt with the relationship of the draft to the war nor of the right of civil disobedience in the context of Christian moral conscience. The peripheral questions of selective conscientious objection and the right to dissent did not arise until after the act had been committed. While hindsight is easier than foresight, it seems probable that greater preparation of the parish before the act might have been of value in this situation.

However, the fact that Mr. Jupin's action was a surprise and shock to most of the people in the parish does not preclude the possibility of creative growth within the fellowship of the parish structure. In fact sometimes a crisis situation such as this can have the effect of compelling

the parish to deal with the issue. This was certainly done in Winchester. By first allowing Mr. Jupin to explain his reasons for turning in his draft card the rector was able to focus the attention of the parish on the main issue involved, namely the war in Vietnam. By encouraging free and open discussion by both parish and vestry, Mr. Bishop allowed the congregation the opportunity to come to grips with the problem. By refusing to allow the discussion to become completely polarized, he maintained the principle of reconciliation, which seems to have come in time. There can be no doubt that this situation completely paralyzed the parish to the extent of severely curtailing both the rector and his assistant's ministries, but in retrospect the controversy seems to have run its course. Whether it has been fully resolved or merely lies dormant ready to spring forth at the slightest provocation remains to be seen.

The underlying issue involved in this and similar situations is whether the church can and should be involved in rapid social change. To this the answer must be an unequivocal yes. Bishop Paul Moore, Jr., has said regarding the church's involvement in change, "The reality is that we must move so fast as to leave people behind. If we do not, the whole church will be left behind."<sup>20</sup> The church today is being called to confront its members with the major social issues of our time. If it fails to challenge its members it may at a later time find itself unable to comfort them. In other words the clergyman today cannot be

a pastor to his flock if he refuses to be a prophet also. It is impossible for the church to ignore the social issues of our time and to do so would be immoral. There is pain in change but there is also growth. Were it not for the possibility of change the incarnation would be a myth and not a reality. God is working his purpose out and it remains the task of Christians everywhere to respond to the challenge which God has set before them. The encouraging aspect of the situation of the church in Winchester is that there is a struggle going on. This shows that there is life there, for without life there can be no growth. The faith of both the clergy and laymen in dealing with controversial problems is demonstrated by facing the problems of our age with courage and strength in the knowledge and love of a God who is able to make all things new.

CHAPTER V  
PEACE AND FREEDOM

On April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. concluded his "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam" with the following words:

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The 'tide in the affairs of men' does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: 'Too late.' There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. 'The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on...' We still have a choice today: non-violent co-existence or violent co-annihilation.

We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world - a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.<sup>1</sup>

One year later, on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was dead. Struck down by an assassin's bullet, the man who had lived for the cause of peace and freedom, had been destroyed by a man who knew neither. Martin Luther King opposed the war in Vietnam on the basis of his faith and calling as a Christian minister. He saw his involvement in the peace movement arising out of his concern for



the rights of all men: the poor in America and Asia, the oppressed people of the world, black and white, yellow and red. He saw the Church's mission to be a peacemaker in a world wracked by violence, and he asked that the destruction being heaped upon Vietnam be stopped, that this nation might once again turn to the task of insuring freedom for all people.

It would be presumptuous for me to think that my small effort in writing this paper could in any way approximate the work for which Martin Luther King lived and died. However, if in some small way this study serves to inform the reader of the nature of the situation in Vietnam and in our nation then my work will not have been in vain. I have tried to show how the policy of the United States Government has challenged the Christian community to respond in a manner faithful to the love of God in Christ. I have shown what steps have been taken by some of the representative bodies of the American churches. Finally, I have pointed out the risks and rewards involved in bringing this concern to the local parish.

In the light of the events of the past few weeks, I have had cause to believe that this presentation has not been forceful enough. If I have erred in my approach to the problem of the war it has been on the side of impartiality. But the impartial position cannot begin to express the seriousness of the present situation. I have become increasingly convinced, of late, that one cannot truly love

that which is good without hating that which is evil in all of us. The strength of a man like Martin Luther King is that he refused to "make peace with oppression" but instead chose to remain faithful to the task set before him - the path of non-violent resistance to that which destroys the goodness inherent in every man as a creation of God. It has become increasingly apparent that the use of violence breeds further violence. Until such time as our nation begins to realize that war does not solve the problems and shortcomings of our foreign policy, there can be no hope for a better world. The time has come to take a long hard look at the presuppositions of American foreign policy in an effort to determine the right course of action for this great and powerful nation to pursue. I am convinced that there can be no lasting peace without real justice, and as Joseph Fletcher points out, "justice is love distributed." Dr. King put it this way, "We are gonna love the hell out of them."

The Church is being called to love the hell out of our nation. This can only be done by people who are willing to follow the way of the cross and to accept the pain and risk which that involves. The time for the Church to speak and to act is now. Tomorrow may be too late. Love always costs something. I hope and pray that we are willing to pay the price. Martin Luther King has said this more poignantly than I. I conclude this study with the words of this great man. May our response to them be his memorial.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter - but beautiful - struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? Will our message be that the forces of American life militate against their arrival as full men, and we send our deepest regrets? Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to their cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history... 3

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